

Message Text

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S/S - MR. MOFFAT

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 014281

NODIS

FOL RPT STATE 014281 ACTION DAMASCUS 21 JAN.

QUOTE

S E C R E T STATE 014281

NODIS

E.O. 11652:XGDS-2

TAGS: PFOR, LE, SY

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION: PLA MOVEMENTS

FOR AMBASSADOR FROM SECRETARY

1. FYI. ALLON SENT JANUARY 19 MESSAGE TO SECRETARY
SAYING ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE INDICATES THAT IN THE LAST
TWO DAYS TWO BATTALIONS OF PLA HAVE ENTERED LEBANON. ONE
IS BATTALION OF THE HITTIN BRIGADE WHICH WENT TO TRIPOLI.
ANOTHER IS A BATTALION OF QADASIYAH BRIGADE WHICH WENT
INTO ZAHLE. A THIRD BATTALION, ALSO OF THE QADASIYAH

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BRIGADE, WILL ENTER ZAHLE JANUARY 19. ANOTHER BATTALION

OF THE SAME BRIGADE IS PREPARING TO ENTER. ISRAELI MESSAGE SAYS INSTRUCTIONS HAVE BEEN GIVEN FOR MOBILIZATION OF THE RESERVE FORCES OF THE PLA. ISRAELI MESSAGE STATES THESE FORCES ARE GENERALLY UNDER OPERATIONAL CONTROL OF THE SYRIAN GENERAL STAFF, AND ARE ON TOP OF THE 2,000 SAIQA WHICH ARE ALREADY IN LEBANON. ALLON EXPRESSES CONCERN AT THIS DEVELOPMENT AND REGARDS IT AS THE FIRST STAGE OF A SYRIAN INCURSION INTO LEBANON.

2. ALLON MADE CLEAR HE DID NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE SYRIANS WILL BRING IN ADDITIONAL BATTALIONS, INCLUDING REGULAR SYRIAN BATTALIONS UNDER PALESTINIAN

FLAGS, AS THEY DID IN JORDAN IN 1970. HE SAID ISRAELI ESTIMATE WAS THAT THESE BATTALIONS CAN OVERRUN THE CHRISTIANS AT THE MOMENT.

3. WE HAVE SENT YOU IN SEPARATE CHANNEL OUR INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE. END FYI.

4. IF YOU HAVE NOT YET ALREADY SEEN SHIHABI WITH REGARD TO LEBANESE SITUATION, YOU SHOULD INCORPORATE POINTS BELOW WHEN YOUR MEETING TAKES PLACE. IF YOU SAW SHIHABI BEFORE ARRIVAL THIS CABLE, YOU SHOULD GO BACK TO HIM TO MAKE THESE POINTS.

5. YOU SHOULD SAY TO SHIHABI THAT WE ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY CONCERNED BY THE DETERIORATING SITUATION IN LEBANON, WHICH HAS SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR AREA PEACE AND STABILITY. THE RESIGNATION OF KARAME, ONLY THE LATEST IN A SERIES OF NEGATIVE DEVELOPMENTS, IS TO BE DEPLORED, SINCE THIS COULD HARDEN CONFESSIONAL LINES AND DENY THE GOVERNMENT HIS EFFECTIVE BRAND OF LEADERSHIP AT A CRITICAL JUNCTURE.

6. BECAUSE OF THESE TRENDS, WE HAVE AUTHORIZED OUR PRESS AND OTHER SPOKESMEN TO TAKE LINES DESCRIBED IN JAN 19 PRESS GUIDANCE (SEPTEL). YOU SHOULD INFORM SHIHABI THAT, AS HE CAN SEE, THIS GUIDANCE IS PARTLY AIMED AT ENCOURAGING KARAME TO WITHDRAW HIS RESIGNATION
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AND REMAIN IN OFFICE WHILE REITERATING OUR BASIC POSITION, WHICH INCLUDES OPPOSITION TO PARTITION AND OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE.

7. IN SAYING TO SHIHABI THAT WE BELIEVE WE SHARE A COMMON INTEREST IN BRINGING THE SITUATION IN LEBANON UNDER CONTROL AND IN DAMPING DOWN FLAMES THAT COULD IGNITE A WIDER CONFLAGRATION, WE WOULD LIKE HIS

APPRAISAL OF PRESENT DEVELOPMENTS AND HOW HE FORESEES
THE FUTURE COURSE OF EVENTS.

8. WE HOPE, OF COURSE, THAT THE SYRIANS WILL DO WHATEVER
THEY CAN TO SECURE A CEASE-FIRE AND TO LAY THE GROUND-
WORK FOR A COMPROMISE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. IN DOING
SO, WE ARE PRESUMING THAT THEY WOULD WISH TO ADVISE
RESTRAINT ON THE FEDAYEEN AND OTHERS WHO MAY WANT TO
MOVE TO AN ALL-OUT SHOWDOWN WITH THEIR ADVERSARIES.

9. YOU SHOULD GO ON TO SAY TO SHIHABI THAT WE HAVE
RECEIVED INDICATIONS THAT THE FLOW OF REINFORCEMENTS TO
THE FEDAYEEN IN LEBANON MAY HAVE BEEN INCREASING RECENTLY
AND THAT SOME OF THESE REINFORCEMENTS MAY BE IN THE FORM

OF PLA UNITS. SUCH MOVEMENTS ARE BOUND TO BE NOTICED BY
THE ISRAELIS AND INEVITABLY WILL KINDLE TENSIONS.

10. YOU SHOULD INFORM SHIHABI THAT, IN VOICING OUR
OPPOSITION TO OUTSIDE INTERVENTION FROM ANY QUARTER, WE
HAVE BEEN ADDRESSING THE ISRAELIS AS WELL AS THE SYRIANS.
THE ISRAELIS, HOWEVER, ARE LIKELY TO BECOME CONCERNED
WITH ANYTHING THAT THEY MIGHT INTERPRET AS SYRIAN
ACQUIESCENCE IN OR SUPPORT FOR A MAJOR MOVEMENT OF PLA
MILITARY UNITS FROM SYRIA INTO LEBANON, A MOVEMENT WHICH
THE ISRAELIS ARE SURE TO CLAIM COULD BE STOPPED BY THE
SYRIANS. YOU SHOULD IMPRESS ON SHIHABI THAT WE ARE
DOUBTFUL WE COULD PREVENT THE ISRAELIS FROM REACTING TO
WHAT THEY MIGHT CONCLUDE IS OUTRIGHT INTERVENTION BY
SYRIA, PARTICULARLY IF THEY CONCLUDED MAJOR SHIFT IN
BALANCE OF POWER IN LEBANON WAS IN THE MAKING.

11. YOU MIGHT THEN EXPLAIN TO SHIHABI THAT WE HAVE
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WATCHED SYRIAN EFFORTS TO MEDIATE THE LEBANESE SITUATION
AND HAVE WISHED THEM WELL. IT IS IN THIS SPIRIT THAT
WE BELIEVE WE OWE THE SYRIANS OUR FRANK JUDGMENT OF THE
DANGERS OF THE PRESENT SITUATION. WHATEVER DIFFERENCES
WE AND THE SYRIANS MAY HAVE ON OTHER ISSUES, WE BELIEVE
WE SHARE A COMMON INTEREST IN STABILIZING THE PRESENT
SITUATION IN LEBANON IN A WAY THAT TAKES INTO ACCOUNT
THE POLITICAL IMPERATIVES THERE AND ASSURES A SENSE OF
SECURITY FOR ALL ITS COMMUNITIES. SISCO

UNQUOTE SISCO

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